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SUBJECT: JOINT U.S.-EC MONITORING TRIP IMPROVES DONOR  
COORDINATION, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN BURUNDI AND  
TANZANIA

REF: STATE 52528

1. (SBU) Summary. In order to improve donor coordination and to bring international attention to the humanitarian needs in Burundi, the U.S. and the European Commission (EC) undertook a joint monitoring mission from March 29-April 2 to assess post-conflict needs and to monitor the work of implementing partners. The overall deterioration of the social system in Burundi will require years of humanitarian assistance to bring living standards up to minimum levels. Nonetheless, the Government of Burundi (GoB) is more interested in gaining direct access to development funds in order to accommodate the needs of returnees and other vulnerable people. The steady, manageable stream of refugees from camps in Tanzania is likely to continue, although UNHCR also has contingency plans for a sudden massive inflow. The major success of the joint monitoring team was bringing together different agencies from both the U.S. and EC that represented a comprehensive assistance mandate and which will facilitate the link between relief and reconstruction. EC funds greatly exceed USG assistance for Burundi. End Summary.

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Pilot Joint-Monitoring Mission: Strengthening Donor  
Coordination  
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2. (U) In order to take transatlantic donor coordination one step further, the U.S. and EC conducted, for the first time ever, a joint monitoring trip to one of the world's regions emerging from civil conflict. In order to underscore the fact that many of our largest humanitarian projects are in Africa, and that a number of regional conflicts on that continent are entering a resolution phase when refugees begin returning home, the top two humanitarian donors chose Burundi for this pilot mission. Apart from the transatlantic nature of the pilot, each side brought together an interagency delegation.

3. (U) Participants for the EC were: Dietmar Krissler (DG Development Burundi desk officer); Gabriela Koehler-Raue (DG Development Tanzania desk officer); Marc Stalmans (EuropeAid post conflict programs manager); Susanne Martin (ECHO Burundi desk officer); Angela Pollitzer (ECHO Tanzania desk officer); Yorgos Kapranis (ECHO/Bujumbura); and Yves Horent (ECHO/Dares Salaam). USG participants were: Shane Hough (PRM/AFR); Marc Meznar (USEU/PRM); Matthew McKeever (Kampala/PRM Refcoord); Denise Gordon (Bujumbura/OFDA) and Robert Marks (Bujumbura/POL-ECON).

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Mission Objectives and Results  
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4. (SBU) The stated objectives of the joint mission were accomplished as follows:

a) Increase transatlantic cooperation between the U.S. and the EC in coordination of humanitarian assistance and longer-term development needs (both at headquarters and field levels)

-- From planning the mission to traveling to remote sites together, a spirit of camaraderie was created that will certainly facilitate direct communication between program officers as they draft and decide on funding priorities in the coming years. USG participants gained a better insight into the various funding pots the EC draws from, including limitations associated with each of these. Understanding the parameters of the EC's 25 million euro, multi-year grant to UNHCR via EuropeAid was particularly important, since PRM frequently encourages the EC to channel more of its assistance through international organizations.

-- Field staff also worked closely together in Bujumbura, with the U.S. taking the lead in arranging meetings in the capital while the EC organized the logistics for the field trip to the Burundi-Tanzania border region. Transatlantic cooperation in the field was strengthened through the joint

planning and travel.

b) Observe and exchange information on best practices in monitoring/evaluation in the field

-- By listening to questions posed to the implementing partners, both sides gained a better understanding of what the funding agency considered appropriate and effective use of donor funds. For example, the EC noted the USG practice of asking governmental authorities about their working relationships with implementing partners. Overall, monitoring and evaluation techniques used by both sides were remarkably similar.

c) Promote coordination in linking relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction

-- The interagency composition of each delegation was perhaps the most important lesson learned from the mission, particularly because it involved planning a multi-year strategy to link the immediate humanitarian needs with longer-term development assistance. This mission marked the first time the three funding entities of the EC had ever traveled together.

-- The joint mission marked one of the first times that EC desk officers responsible for neighboring countries in different geographic regions (i.e., Great Lakes versus southern Africa) had traveled jointly.

-- In the case of Burundi, the humanitarian needs are overwhelming because 99% of the population lives below the poverty line; humanitarian assistance will be needed long after reconstruction has begun.

d) Assess the competing needs in terms of social and economic rehabilitation and reintegration in Burundi of returning refugees, internally displaced, and demobilized soldiers

-- In almost every meeting with international implementing partners, the need to "de-label" those requiring assistance was emphasized. According to many interlocutors, labeling and providing different levels of assistance based on whether individuals were refugees, internally displaced or former combatants would be counter-productive in the long run. Because the infrastructure in Burundi is so degraded, many felt the best approach to humanitarian assistance would be to focus on infrastructure upgrades to schools, health clinics, etc. for the benefit of all, particularly in areas of return.

-- Of the three groups of vulnerable people considered, the problem of demobilizing combatants was viewed as the most complex because their possession of weapons gave them leverage to demand greater assistance. Furthermore, the psychosocial support to this category of vulnerable people, particularly child soldiers, was deemed most critical. Failure to provide schooling might make them vulnerable to re-recruitment by rebel fighters and thus perpetuate the cycle of violence.

e) Assess the accuracy of pre-departure information and expectations in camps before returns begin

-- In general, refugees in the camps were well aware of the degraded social services that currently exist in Burundi and frequently cited this situation as a reason for remaining in Tanzania. Some seemed to erroneously think that if a border crossing had not yet been opened to their province of origin (many were from Makamba province) they were not allowed to return home voluntarily. Another major reason for not returning was the fear of renewed ethnic violence, particularly in a post-electoral period. Some refugee leaders said that they would return only when the Burundian security sector is reformed. Radio seemed to be the primary venue for hearing news about developments in Burundi.

f) Monitor and verify procedures and numbers of returning refugees at the Tanzania/Burundi border and conditions in reception areas

-- On successive days, the joint delegation monitored the Gisuru reception and transit center in Ruyigi. Overall, UNHCR's organization and coordination with the various entities working within the center was exceptional. Of the registered refugees in the Tanzania camps, a total of 63,384 are from Ruyigi province; another 30,000 or so will also transit through Gisuru to provinces neighboring Ruyigi. The joint team found the actual number of returnees per convoy (350) was a little lower than the estimated number per convoy (500), the number UNHCR is working with when projecting its workload for 2004. WFP has seemingly solved much of its logistics problem in providing return packages / food rations in support of returning refugees. The capacity of the Gisuru reception and transit center was estimated by WFP as 3,000 returnees per week.

-- The transfer of health data from IRC (the NGO in charge for health in the Kibondo, TZ camps) to AHA (health NGO working with returnees at the transit center) is an area of the operation that could use some revamping. The story of the death of a diabetic young woman upon returning home to Ruyigi because of inadequate medical oversight highlighted the lack of cross-border coordination between UNHCR country offices and health NGOs.

g) Assess programs in place to return displaced people to regions of origin or newly established villages, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration efforts

-- The GoB's idea to create villages was received with mixed feelings by the displaced. Some, particularly women, indicated that if conditions equaled those in the Tanzania refugee camps they would consider relocating to a village. Others insisted they would only return to their own land.

-- Conditions at a temporary settlement site for both returning refugees and internally displaced persons in Kabuyenge visited by the joint mission were extremely primitive. However, returnees seemed to be upbeat even though they expressed some safety concerns related to bandits. A primary school that had been gutted was partially restored allowing some education. Some expressed a wish to settle permanently in Kabuyenge.

h) Assess government and UNHCR policies to facilitate rehabilitation & reintegration of the above mentioned target groups

-- Some officials and implementing partners argued that three months worth of food for returnees was not enough to facilitate reintegration, particularly for those who returned during the dry season when planting could not begin immediately. However, saddling refugees with even more food items would not be tenable since the GoB was not fulfilling its responsibility to transport returnees from UNHCR drop-off points to final destinations. A solution, albeit impractical, would be to provide the reintegration kits at destination. As is, refugees sell off, at below market value, food and NFI supplies -- something that minimizes donor contributions and also negatively affects the local market.

-- MSF/Belgium presented the results of an in-depth study about the effect on child mortality from a GoB plan to recover medical expenses by charging vulnerable populations based on a sliding scale. In general, those made to pay half of the overall expenses fared worse than those required to pay just for the extras, like lab tests and medication. Mortality rates of those who received free health care were a fraction of the other two categories.

i) Assess institutional capacities of government and UNHCR to deal with the load of returning refugees

-- The transitional government does not appear to be able to meet the needs of returnees, even though official policy is to encourage them to return. GoB officials visit camps in Tanzania, describe conditions in the country and promise to improve the infrastructure.

-- Overlap and competition between the Ministry for Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Displaced and Affected and the National Committee for the Reinsertion of Vulnerable Populations needs to be resolved. The government would prefer ending humanitarian assistance (which is channeled through international implementing partners) in order to receive direct infusions of development aid for rebuilding the infrastructure.

-- UNHCR staffing in Burundi, particularly in the sub-regional offices it intends to open, needs to be strengthened. Neither the chief of mission in Bujumbura or the officer setting up the sub-office in Ruyigi seemed firmly in control of details or transmitted an urgency in moving the agenda forward. By contrast, the head of Kibondo sub-regional office in Tanzania portrayed an effective management style, although she lamented that for long stretches only one of a total of five international positions were filled.

-- EC officers suggested tapping into unused resources from Burundi accounts to fund repatriation efforts from Tanzania, instead of UNHCR's current practices of cutting care and maintenance for refugee camps to fund the logistics of the return from the Tanzania account. During the Tanzania portion of the trip delegation members saw the direct impact of the redirection of "care and maintenance" funds to repatriation: UNHCR has begun exploring once monthly food distributions vice biweekly (which has a significant effect on household economy leading to more food selling and less food security).

j) Underscore importance of effectively managing post-conflict developments in Burundi by the joint trip of the top two donors

-- The joint mission met with top GoB officials dealing with refugee issues including Francoise Ngendahayo, the Minister for Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Displaced and Affected people, and Frederick Bavuginyumvira, the President of the National Committee for the Reinsertion of Vulnerable Populations. At a dinner hosted by the EC ambassador, the delegation was also able to discuss with the Minister of Finance issues of concern (such as the policy change requiring health officials to recover medical expenses with returnees). In Ruyigi, the joint delegation met with the provincial governor.

-- Furthermore, the joint mission had the opportunity to brief the top Geneva-based UNHCR officer for Africa, Assistant High Commissioner Kamel Morjane, following their field trip and convey impressions and recommendations. By meeting and expressing concerns jointly to top governmental and IO officials, the strength of the message had a multiplying effect.

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GoB: Unable to meet needs  
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15. (SBU) In a meeting with Ngendahayo on April 2, the minister stated that life in Burundi may not be as good as the refugees have it in Tanzania, "but at least they're free and not herded into camps like animals." As proof she pointed to the large numbers who are spontaneously and voluntarily voting with their feet, even walking for three days to reach home. She noted that while many humanitarian organizations are in place, the infrastructure to help returnees reintegrate into society is missing. Ngendahayo stated that the government could not compete with NGOs and churches in providing and rehabilitating shelter, but she expressed concern that no uniform standards were being followed by these organizations. She indicated this could lead to future resentment. The minister briefly touched on the idea of model villages as a solution to this problem.

16. (SBU) She also mentioned a fluctuating security situation, which discourages returns. Ngendahayo stated that an important objective of her ministry was to build the capacity of "welcoming committees" in order to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. She lamented that many of those born and/or reared in the politicized camps are fed a continuous diet of hate, which she emphasized by breaking into English and terming it "brain washing". She also briefly touched on refugee resettlement activities out of the camps, cautioning against criminals and others perpetrating fraud (by claiming they are orphans, etc.). Regarding elections and violence, Ngendahayo minimized the connection between the two by explaining that the violence was connected to change (i.e., independence in 1961, abolition of the monarchy in 1965, end of a single-party political system in 1972, etc., and the subsequent settling of accounts in 1993), not elections per se. She also minimized the effect that refugees would have on the upcoming elections, noting that those eligible to vote from the camps would only be about 3% of Burundi's electoral population.

17. (SBU) Regarding relations with UNHCR, she said that after a rocky start with disagreements over security in certain regions, cooperation had greatly improved. She highlighted the problem that UNHCR caused by describing how those returning spontaneously were forced to ask military commanders for food because UNHCR was not providing assistance in phase four areas.

18. (SBU) In a separate meeting with the National Committee for the Reinsertion of Vulnerable Populations, Bavuginyumvira emphasized that in Burundi, creating a distinction between humanitarian work and development was artificial because the whole social infrastructure needed rehabilitation. He suggested that the medical centers could be privatized to improve services. Because returnees generally lacked housing in their places of origin, he recommended that construction tools and supplies such as nails and roofing be included in reintegration kits. He also promoted the creation of model villages, particularly for demobilized combatants arguing "Who could refuse them?"

19. (SBU) Bavuginyumvira stated that 2,000 refugees were returning each week to Ruyigi province, and that the total number of returnees per week to Burundi was about 3,000. He ventured that opening Makamba crossing on April 20 might trigger a massive return. When asked about UNHCR, Bavuginyumvira said that the agency needed more human resources and material supplies. He also noted a problem with payment of salaries, that Geneva was not sending funds to pay its staff in-country.

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10. (SBU) On April 1, the joint mission met with UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner Kamel Morjane to brief him on their field visit and relay preliminary impressions. Major points made by the EC and USG representatives included:

- a) Obstacles to repatriation:
  - lingering ethnic divisions (with some refugees demanding a 50/50 ethnic composition of the armed forces);
  - fears that the elections might be the prelude to renewed ethnic-based violence;
  - generalized banditry;
  - political pressure from rebel factions to not return (or on the other hand, to do so -- one scenario for a massive uncontrolled return) and;
  - lower levels of basic social services and education:

The joint delegation emphasized, nonetheless, there was a general will to return, and those who were in sub-standard returnee settlements still seemed to be satisfied they had made the right decision in returning.

- b) Repatriation logistics:
  - GoB is not transporting returnees from UNHCR drop off points to places of origin as originally planned;
  - There may be a need to revisit composition of both food and NFI return packets (as many need to walk up to 15 miles to finally reach home) if transportation all the way to returnees, homes cannot be realized;
  - There is an insufficient budget for repatriation in Tanzania (which results in cut backs to care and maintenance in the camps);
  - Benchmarks must be defined or made more explicit before promoting returns, and;
  - A systematic plan to utilize the acquired skills of returnees in rebuilding Burundi would be highly useful and productive in the long run. Plugging in skilled returnees is difficult because of their general reluctance to be made known to local government officials in their areas of origin.

The joint delegation stated UNHCR deserved high marks for the orderly return operation to date.

- c) Staffing issues:
  - A serious need exists to improve coordination between UNHCR staff in Tanzania and Burundi (including use of EC funds for Burundi to pay for the repatriation logistics instead of borrowing from the camp budgets);
  - Sub-regional offices in the provinces must be fully staffed and made operational (for example, Ruyigi only had a few temporary staff in place although its plan calls for a dozen international officers and 30 local hires);
  - UNHCR must avoid bringing staff from other critical regions with human resource deficits (one of the Ruyigi staff on mission had come from Guinea), and;
  - UNHCR should set an example by having an ethnically balanced local staff (all those employed by UNHCR in Ruyigi were Tutsis).

11. (SBU) Morjane was receptive to all these points and said they contained no surprises. He noted that because it was unclear whether returns would continue at a slow, steady pace or suddenly burst into a massive return, UNHCR would release a supplemental budget for 2004/2005. Regarding promoting returns, he said that there was no need to do so if the current flows continued, that local authorities were not able to absorb higher numbers of returnees. Morjane stated, "All Burundi needs humanitarian assistance," and that need would continue for the next ten years at least. He acknowledged the benefits of a diversified staff but mentioned problems of finding Hutus with necessary professional skills. McKeever urged UNHCR to consider the skills acquired by refugees in the camp when hiring local staff and devising community programs in return areas.

12. (SBU) Stalmans mentioned that EuropeAid has not been happy with the results of its pilot pledge of 25 million euros for UNHCR for the repatriation and reintegration of returnees. He said that not enough work was done to prepare for the repatriation effort before people started spontaneously and voluntarily returning and that UNHCR had not provided adequate reports as to how the money was being spent. (He noted that things were not much different in the other pilot refugee program for Eritrea.) Morjane acknowledged initial differences of opinion about the security situation in the country, which led to a more cautious approach by UNHCR than other parties had hoped for. Morjane said that over half of the 11 million euros had already been programmed and that the balance would be used before the end of the year. He said that although UNHCR had strengthened its dialogue with ECHO, it was evident that similar measures needed to be taken with EuropeAid since it had become a major funding partner of UNHCR.

13. (U) Morjane said he would be visiting many of the same camps, resettlement sites and reception areas monitored by the U.S.-EU joint mission. He hoped 2004 would be the year for solutions in Africa, not just in Burundi, but also in Angola, DRC, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan. He called the evolving refugee situation in Chad "the" emergency for UNHCR at this time.

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ECHO Funding: Meeting Humanitarian Needs  
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14. (U) ECHO's global plan for Burundi notes that the country ranks 171 out of 175 on UNDP's human development index and that over two-thirds of its citizens are undernourished. Life expectancy has fallen from 53.8 years in 1992 to 40.9 years in 2001. Other indicators -- such as the number of IDPs per total population, number of refugees to GDP per capita, ODA/per capita (calculated by the OECD), children under weight per age and child mortality rate (calculated by UNICEF) -- predict that general humanitarian assistance will be required for at least the next ten years in Burundi. Thus, all envelopes coming from ECHO, EuropeAid and DG Development will focus on bringing the country up to minimum standards. The joint U.S.-EU monitoring trip also marked the first time these three EC agencies traveled together and should prove effective in encouraging a more systematic application of EC funds so that the link between emergency relief and longer-term goals are in place.

15. (U) ECHO's latest funding decision of 15 million euros for Burundi will cover an 18 month period beginning in February 2004 and will be targeted to the following sectors: food (33.3%), health (27.6%), water and sanitation (19.6%), emergency relief and non-food items (6%), protection and coordination (4%), psychosocial assistance (3%), and the balance on other activities. These ECHO funds have been earmarked as follows:

- 11.85 million euros to assist with the reintegration of returnees (both IDPs and refugees) and will be channeled through ICRC, FAO, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, OCHA, WHO and other NGO implementing partners;
- 3 million euros to help international organizations like ICRC, OCHA, UNICEF and WHO carry out their specific mandates; and,
- 150,000 euros in technical assistance to facilitate monitoring and evaluation by field staff.

16. (U) A separate decision by ECHO to support the refugee camps in Tanzania provides 15 million euros for funding:

- to operate and maintain 280 four wheel drive vehicles and 70 light trucks in order to improve access to the camps;
- to improve the infrastructure in the camps, which includes the registration of refugees, environmental protection, community services, shelter and other non-food items;
- to provide care and maintenance of the refugees, such as health, nutrition and hygiene (especially vulnerable groups such as children, breast-feeding mothers and HIV/AIDS patients).

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EuropeAid Funding: Preparing for Repatriation and Reintegration  
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17. (U) Although ECHO funding for Burundi has fallen over the past years -- down from 20 million euros in 2001 to 17.5 million euros in 2002 and 15 million euros in 2003 -- the EC has made a political commitment to bolster the peace process in the country by designating 25 million euros to prepare for the repatriation, return and reintegration of refugees in the region. Using development accounts administered by EuropeAid (taken from the 7th and 8th European Development Funds), UNHCR has been given a multi-year grant covering the period 2002-2004. UNHCR has used some of this money to rehabilitate roads for the repatriation effort, as well as schools and other infrastructure in refugee return areas. The remaining 11 million euros should be spent by UNHCR this year.

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DG DEV Funding: Linking Relief to Reconstruction  
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18. (U) On September 9, 2003, the European Commission and GoB signed the 9th European Development Fund, which is divided into two envelopes:

- 115 million euros in envelope A to be spent on rural development (49%), good governance (15%) and macroeconomic assistance (27%); and,
- 57 million euros in envelope B for emerging needs, of which 25 million euros has already been pledged to support the Africa Mission in Burundi (AMIB) peacekeeping operation coordinated by the AU. The AMIB mission will also help begin

the disarming, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, another "at risk" group with special needs.

119. (U) Because the general degradation of social services is so widespread throughout the country, these EDF funds programmed by DG Development will also be used in large part to meet the needs of the returnees.

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Member State Funding: Supplementing EC efforts  
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120. (U) In addition to EC funding, various EU Member States maintain bilateral aid programs that provide significant funds to help meet Burundi's needs. In 2003, EU Member States contributed the following euro amounts:

-- Belgium: 3,260,417  
-- Sweden: 1,830,000  
-- Netherlands: 1,161,000  
-- Germany: 1,607,000  
-- Denmark: 390,765  
-- France: 232,986  
-- United Kingdom: 171,112  
-- Spain: 150,000

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Comment  
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121. (U) As a pilot endeavor, the joint monitoring trip to Burundi and Tanzania was overwhelmingly positive -- both substantively by addressing humanitarian needs and politically by enhancing the transatlantic relationship. Through joint travel to the field, relations between agencies were strengthened and donor coordination improved. Implementing partners also appreciated briefing multiple agencies simultaneously, thus economizing on time and resources which five separate visits would have required. Before the joint mission had ended, the EC already suggested a follow-on activity, either in the same region or a different part of the world. ECHO and USEU have since featured the joint trip on their websites.

MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

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